

The Nubian Campaign

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When General Forrest gave as his prescription for strategic success, "Git thar fust with the most," he certainly was not thinking of archeology. And the Oriental Institute was not thinking of the general's advice when it embarked upon the international campaign to save the antiquities of Nubia, threatened by the erection of the High Dam along the Nile. As it turned out, the Institute was there first and has continued with the most. Dr. Hughes attended the preliminary Unesco study meeting in Cairo in October, 1959. Dr. Žabkar still hopes to return to the excavation of Semna South in the Sudan next winter. In between runs the roll of places which the Institute's expedition investigated, under the vigorous direction of Dr. Seele: Kalabshah, Beit el-Wali, Serra East, Dorginarti, Qustul, Ballana, and Qasr el-Wizz. The Epigraphic Expedition moved from Luxor to copy the neat little temple of Beit el-Wali. That publication should appear soon. The west hall of the Institute's museum shows the brilliant display of Dr. Seele's two seasons at Qustul and Ballana. The Institute was the first institution to take to the field in answer to the Unesco appeal of March, 1960; and its record of six seasons, with the prospect of a seventh, is unsurpassed.

You might say that we had to. A seventy-year reputation was at stake. The forty-year record of Chicago House at Luxor was at stake. When the emergency was first announced, other institutions, also reluctant to shift gears, wanted to know whether the Oriental Institute was going to participate or to plead more pressing obligations. That sense of obligation might be true. It is also true that Egyptology in particular and archeology in general received a great stimulation from the campaign, so that selfish interests were served as a by-product. Under what other conditions could we have given a half-dozen graduate students field experience?

Some of the pieces found by these expeditions were unique, beautiful, or historically important. The range of materials, particularly the pottery, is

wide and detailed. The history of Nubia from prehistoric times into the Christian Era should be brilliantly illustrated by these pieces. Most of the excavation was financed by American government credits, made available in Egypt. Publication is another problem. Dr. Seele urgently needs money, so that he and his assistants may prepare these thousands of objects for publication.

The international and national aspects of the campaign also fell into the Institute's responsibility. One illustration is Dr. Seele's visit to the White House, to present Mrs. Johnson with a Nubian vessel, in publicizing the need for additional funds to save the temples at Abu Simbel. I have been involved in the work of two international and two American committees over the past seven years. The United States National Committee for the Preservation of the Nubian Monuments drafted the proposals which resulted in the allocation of \$16,000,000 to the campaign—\$1,500,000 to aid American archeologi-

Blocks of the dismantled Nubian temple of Dendur lie on the Island of Elephantine at Assuan ready to be transported to the U.S. as a gift from the U.A.R. Photo courtesy of William R. Boyd.



cal expeditions, \$2,500,000 for the moving of smaller temples in Egypt and the Sudan, and \$12,000,000 for Abu Simbel.

The international committees have been a fascinating and rewarding experience. Representatives from the United Arab Republic, two Communist countries, and eight Western countries have served on the committees best known to me. There was no politics, no interplay of power pressures. There was a job to be done, and there was a faithful harmony in meeting that job, both on the advisory committee, which met in a Cairo hotel to plan the entire program for Egypt, and on the “landscaping group,” which traveled on a boat to supervise the reconstruction of Abu Simbel. In each case we came to make proud little jokes about “the spirit of Nubia”—the wholehearted dedication to cultural goals uniting persons of divergent backgrounds. Would that we could apply “the spirit of Nubia” to other problems of the area!